

HISTORICAL FIRSTS OF PINCKNEYVILLE
AND PERRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS

by
Robert M. Spurgeon

English 112
Dr. Luchsinger
April 23, 1974

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CHAPTER ONE

Historical Firsts of Pinckneyville and Perry County, Illinois

In this paper I will attempt to observe, discover, and record historical firsts which have occurred at Pinckneyville and in Perry County, of which Pinckneyville is the county seat. In this paper I will also attempt to point out such historical firsts as the county's formation, the original pioneers, industry, education, religion, and other facts of interest and importance.

Perry County, like many of the counties in Southern Illinois, is rich in historical facts. Many men added to the history of Perry County. Some notable ones were George Rogers Clark who marched through Perry County on his way to Vincennes, General John A. Logan, civil war hero who belonged to the Masonic Lodge in Pinckneyville, Missouri outlaw Sam Hildebrand who was killed in Pinckneyville while resisting arrest, and noted Mormon pioneer John Brown who left Perry County after joining the Mormon Church and as a member of Brigham Young's party was one of the first men to enter the Great Salt Lake Valley.¹

CHAPTER ONE

Historical Events of Pinckneyville and Perry County, Illinois

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Published by His Son, John Zimmerman Brown, A.B., M.D.
(Press of Stevens & Wallis, Inc. 1941).

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CHAPTER TWO

COUNTY FORMATION

The formation of Perry County was approved on January 29th, 1827, by the Illinois Legislative meeting at Vandalia, then the state capital of Illinois. The county was named in honor of American Naval hero, Commodore Oliver H. Perry, who defeated the British in the battle of Lake Erie. Perry County was made up of parts from both Randolph and Jackson counties. In 1832, the eastern boundary was extended to the Little Muddy River into what was then Franklin County.²

FIRST COUNTY OFFICES

In anticipation of the County approval, Theophilis W. Smith, Associate Justice of this Judicial District, appointed Humphrey B. Jones as circuit clerk for an election to be held at Amos Anderson's home located on Panther Creek, east of Pinckneyville. There are no records of this election in the Perry County Court House, but due to the efforts of a Dr. Brayshaw, it appears that this election may have been declared illegal by State officials. Although there are no records, a second election appears to have been held with the following people being elected and sworn into office: for Commissioners: John R. Hutchings, David H. Mead, and Elijah Wells; for Sheriff; William C. Murphy; and for Coroner: Amos Anderson.

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These men were the first elected officials sworn into office in Perry County.³

FIRST COUNTY SEAT

The first and only county seat Perry County has ever had is the City of Pinckneyville. The site for the County Seat was selected October 22, 1827 by a committee of three men. This location is the present day city of Pinckneyville and is approximately in the center of the county.⁴ Pinckneyville is believed to have been named in honor of Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Revolutionary war hero from South Carolina. However, as of this date, no records to verify this have been found.

FIRST KNOWN GRAVE MARKER IN COUNTY

The oldest known marked grave in Perry County is that of Ephraim B., son of Robert and Kezia McElvain, who died January 5, 1822, at 5 months of age. The grave is located in the McElvain Cemetery south of Highway 152 about one mile west of DuQuoin.⁵

FIRST INHABITANTS OF PERRY COUNTY

The first inhabitants of Perry County were undoubtedly American Indians of the Tamaroa and Kaskaskia tribes. It is not known if these Indians lived in Perry County for long periods of time, or for short periods during hunts; however, it is known that two of their favorite camp areas were on what is known as "Hutchings Prairie" in the northern part of Perry County, and in what is known as "Four Mile Prairie" south of

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is known as "Hutchings Prairie" in the northern part of Perry
County, and in what is known as "Four Mile Prairie" south of

Pinckneyville. Early settlers describe evidence of an Indian battle with the prairie being littered with human bones. It is believed that this battle was fought between the Kaskaskia and Kickapoo tribes.⁶

The first permanent white settler was John Flack who settled in Four Mile Prairie, near what later became Pennyville. When Flack arrived, the only white people in the county were a family by the name of Cox who had taken up a temporary residence near Beaucoup Creek. Cox and his family soon moved on.⁷

FIRST STORE IN PINCKNEYVILLE

In 1830, the first store in Pinckneyville was operated by David Baldrige in the court house which he leased from the county for \$.75 a month except during times of court. Josiah B. Denning was also issued a merchant's license the same year as Baldrige and opened a place of business shortly after him.⁸

FIRST COURT HOUSE

The first court house was located on the southeast corner of Lot 32 in Pinckneyville, according to the original survey. This is the location where the law offices of Hohlt, House, DeMoss, and Johnson are now doing business. The building was constructed of logs, was 18 feet by 22 feet, with a puncheon floor, no ceiling, one door, and a window facing the west.

The furniture consisted of a table, a bench for the public, and a bar for the Judge. Having been completed in September 1828, the first court was held on April 10, 1829. The second courthouse was constructed of brick and was erected in 1837 on the public square after the original building became too small.⁹

FIRST JAIL

The first jail in Perry County was constructed on the same site as our present jail now stands. It was constructed during 1833 and 1834 of brick with 3 inner walls of square timber. It was a two story building with inside dimensions of 14 x 16 feet. The county paid Amos Anderson a sum of \$750 for its construction.¹⁰

THE FIRST MURDER TRIAL

The first murder trial in Perry County was held after a change of venue was granted in St. Clair County. The defendant was William Corberly, who was found guilty and sentenced to two months and three weeks in the penitentiary of which two weeks were to be spent in solitary confinement.

The first execution for murder was that of James Vaughn who murdered William Watts, city marshall of Tamaroa, as Watts was attempting to arrest Vaughn for disturbing the peace. Vaughn was convicted and sentenced to be hung. The execution was carried out on June 16th, 1882 in the present day Perry County jail. Thirty five minutes after he was dropped through the trap he was pronounced dead.¹¹

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FIRST RAILROAD

The Illinois Central has the honor of being Perry County's first railroad. It entered the county from the north through Tamaroa then on to DuQuoin. Construction on the line from Chicago to Cairo was begun in 1851. The construction of the Illinois Central was considered an engineering miracle. Laborers were recruited from the east, with the rails coming from England, and the ties and bridge timbers coming from Michigan. Construction in Perry County was completed around 1853, and the town of DuQuoin was moved to its present site from Old DuQuoin.¹²

FIRST SALT WORKS

Perry County's first salt works were located in the village of St. John north of DuQuoin. Salt was discovered in 1870 at a depth of 3600 feet while drilling to determine strata for coal mining purposes. The salt works became a large industry employing approximately 350 people.¹³

FIRST MILL

The first mill seems to be that of Elijah Wells, which he constructed on the west side of Nine Mile Prairie, east of Pinckneyville sometime previous to 1829.¹⁴

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FIRST STREET CAR

Perry County's first and only street car operated between the towns of DuQuoin and the village of St. Johns and was constructed in 1882. Cars were pulled by horses and mules. The passengers were charged 5¢ per person.¹⁵

FIRST POST OFFICE

The first post office was in the residence of H. B. Jones. His house was located near a spring in what is now the north end of Pinckneyville near 419 North Sullivan St.¹⁶

FIRST TAVERN

The first tavern licensed in Perry County was that of Amos Anderson, located in his home southeast of Pinckneyville. The first licensed tavern to appear in Pinckneyville was in 1829 and was in the home of Joseph Wells. It was a little log cabin located where Braun Standard Station now stands.¹⁷

FIRST PREACHING

The first organized preaching was probably done around 1828 or 1829 by Micajah Phelps, a Methodist.¹⁸

FIRST CHURCH

The first church built in Perry County was the Hopewell Presbyterian Church which was completed in 1833. Hopewell was located about four miles west of Pinckneyville, and

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The church merged with Pinckneyville in 1947 and all that remains today is the cemetery and a commemorative marker.¹⁰

FIRST MASONIC LODGE

Mitchell Lodge No. 85 was the first Masonic Lodge in the county chartered October 8, 1850; and in later years had as one of its members General John A. Logan. A copy of his petition is still on hand at the Lodge.²⁰

FIRST EDUCATION

The first school taught in present day Perry County was taught by Robert Clark in 1825, near what is now Denmark. This was previous to the formation of Perry County and was located in what was Randolph County.

B.G. Roots opened an academy near Tamaroa in 1839 and had such well known pupils as Supreme Court Judge Allen and General John A. Logan.²¹

Old DuQuoin boasts the county's first Seminary, founded in 1852 by "The Boston Ladies Society for the Promotion of Christian Education". Their institution was known as the "DuQuoin Female Seminary". The last term was completed in 1892, and the school stood empty until 1898 when it burned. Today there is no physical evidence left of the school.²²

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FIRST BRIDGE

The first bridge built in the county was around 1830 or 1831 across Beaucoup Creek east of Pinckneyville. The county gave the contract to build the 16 foot wide bridge to Joseph Wells who was required to give bonds to guarantee the bridge for five years.²³

FIRST REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER CERTIFIED FOR PENSION

Leonard Lipe and Lewis Wells in September 1832, and Benjamin Johnson in May of 1833 were the first Revolutionary soldiers certified as entitled to receive pensions by the Perry County Circuit Court.²⁴

FIRST FAIR

The Perry County fair at Pinckneyville was not only the first fair in Perry County, but is the oldest continuous fair in the State. Started before the Civil War in the year of 1856 while Pinckneyville was just 28 years old, this year the fair will be 118 years old and still going strong.²⁵

FIRST COAL MINE

Perry County has many assets, but one of its greatest is its coal. Coal has virtually been the life blood of Perry County. Coal mines were virtually nonexistent in the county until after the coming of the railroad. In 1855, Cornelus Storm and J. C. Storm, his son, were sent to sink shafts along the

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Illinois Central Railroad property. They were employed by the railroad. They selected a site near the present day village of St. Johns, thus starting an industry that still thrives today.

Today there are no shaft mines operating in Perry County, as strip mining has completely taken over. Strip mining began with landowners using horses pulling scoops to uncover small outcroppings of coal near the earth's surface. Commercial operations were begun by Thomas J. Howells at DuQuoin in 1904 when he purchased a steam shovel that had previously been used to help dig the Panama Canal, thus beginning
26
Perry County's largest industry.

FIRST MARRIAGE

The first marriage license issued in Perry County was on November 17th, 1827, to Alexander Clark and Ruth Teague, who were married by County Commissioner Elijah Wells on November 22, 1837. Ruth died in Perry County and is buried in Galum Baptist Cemetery, west of Pinckneyville; and Alexander died in
27
Missouri in 1862.

FIRST DOCTOR

Dr. Joseph Brayshaw is regarded as Perry County's first physician. From South Carolina, he came to Old DuQuoin in 1830. He visited his patients wherever he was needed, traveling by horseback or horse and buggy, even going to adjoining

counties. He was well educated, and his hobby was grafting
fruit trees. He taught the art to many of his friends and
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¹³ Ibid.

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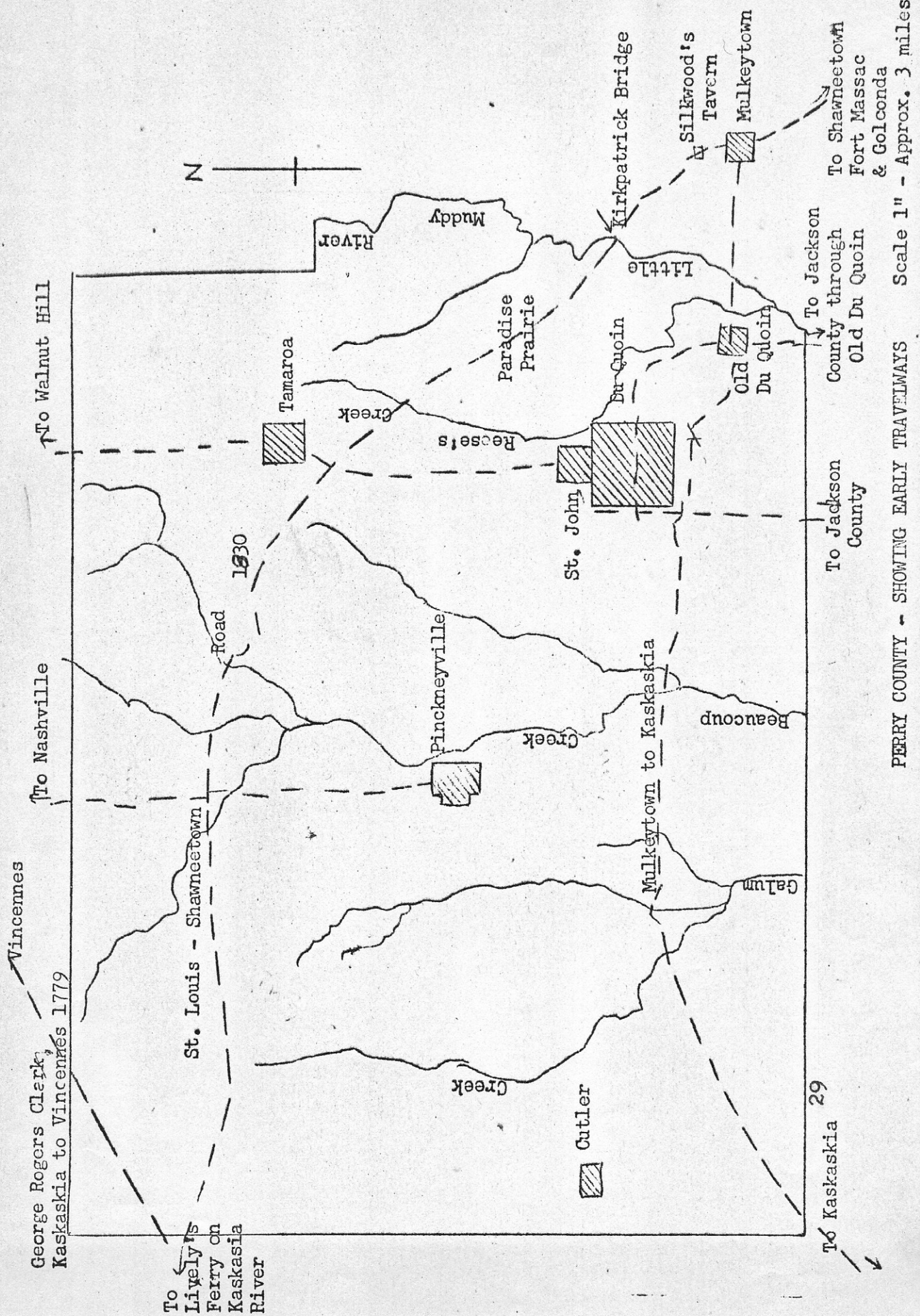
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CHAPTER THREE

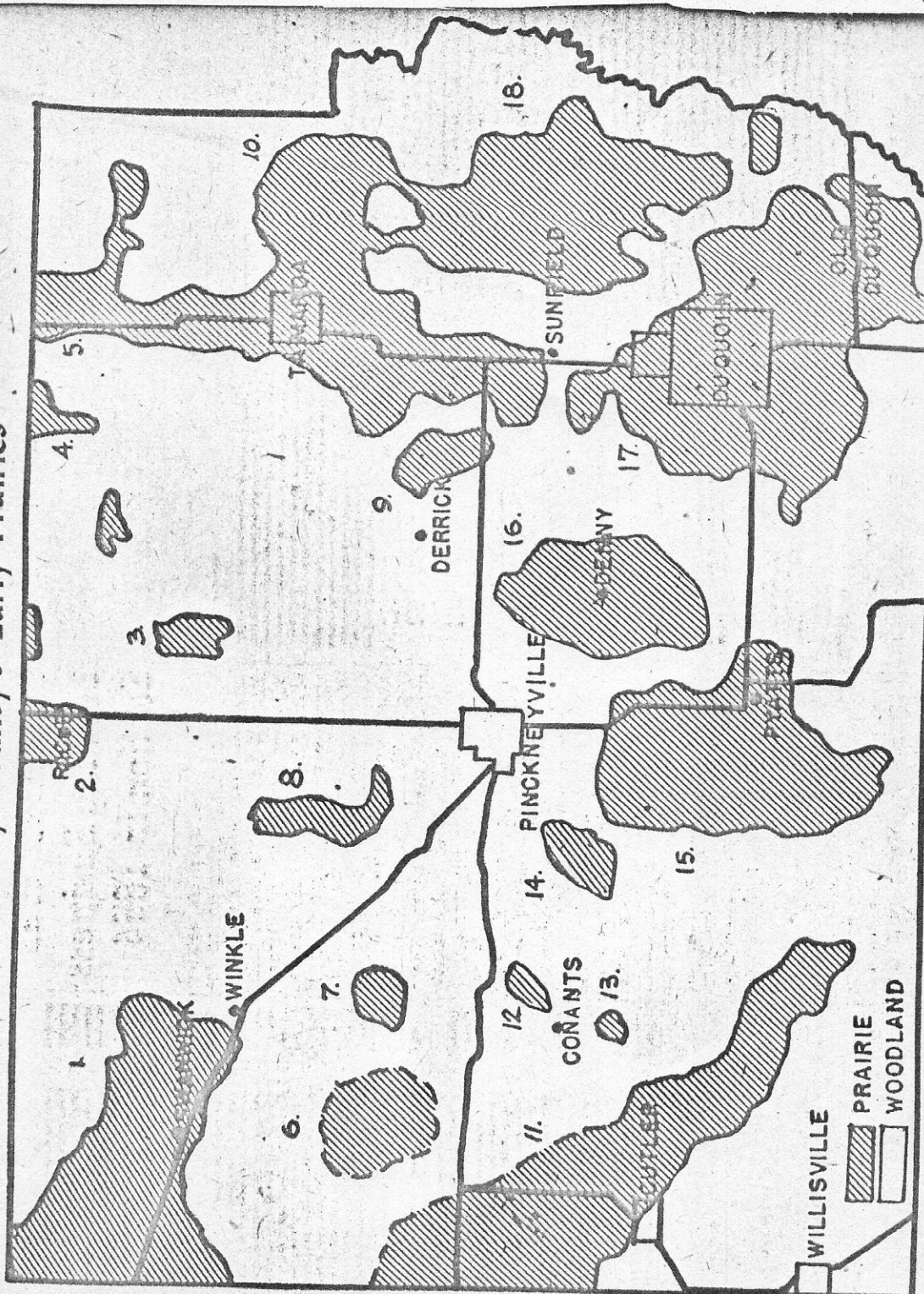


6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
Laurel Street					
18	17	Jones 16 12.56 1/2	15	14	13
19	Anderson 20 \$800	Glover 21 \$2200	A. Anderson 22 \$1650	23 \$600	24
Jackson Street					
30	28	PUBLIC SQUARE <i>32 1/2 Court House Here</i>	26 A. B. Anderson 27 28 33	25	
31	29		34		
	32				
Water Street					
40	Matt Vann 39 \$1750	Wells 38 \$3250	37	Wm. Threlkeld 36 \$1550	35
41	Eli Shortt 42 \$1300	Brown 43 \$2650	CRAIN 44 \$1600	45	46
Mulberry Street					
52	51	50	49	48	47

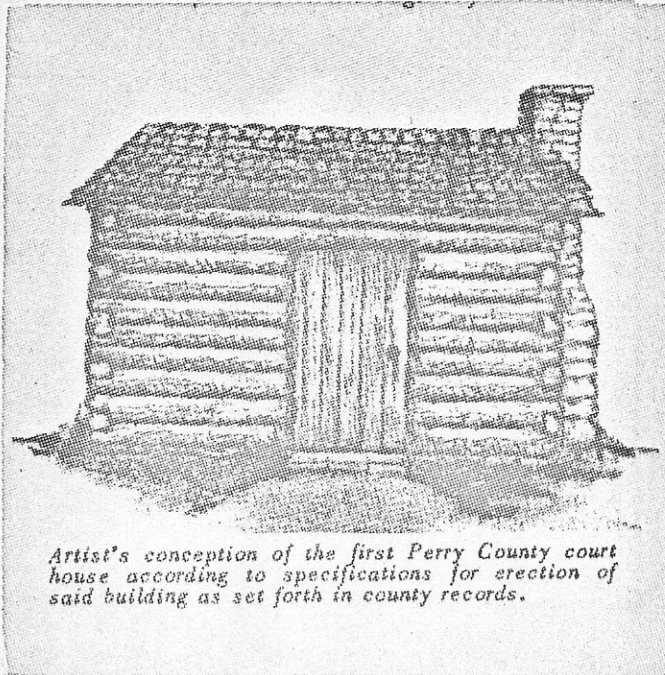
Plat of original town of Pinckneyville, Illinois
 recorded on page 39 in Book A - 1827 - 1832
 Deed Record - Perry County, Illinois.
 Scale 200' - 1 inch

Lots 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33 - 66' wide - 99' long
 All other lots - 99' square
 Main Street - 60' wide
 Laurel, Mulberry Streets - 54' wide
 Locust, Walnut Streets - 50' wide
 Jackson, Water Streets - 44' wide
 Alley No. 1, Alley No. 2 - 24' wide

Perry County's Early Prairies

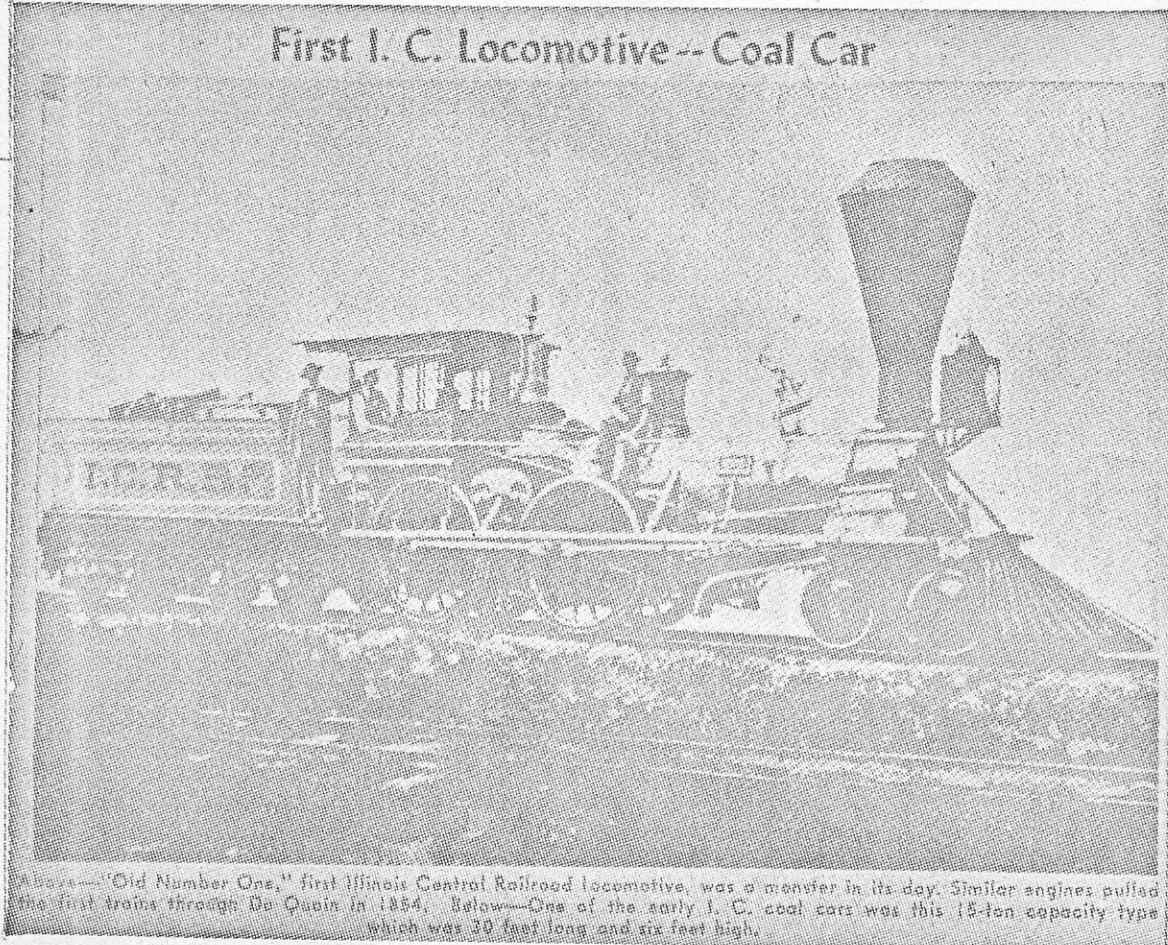


Perry county, before the white man came, was made up of a series of prairies which got their names from first settlers, important incidents, etc. This map by Julius Swayne, a native of Du Quoin who is now on the faculty at Southern Illinois University, shows the more important regions. By number they include: 1—Grand Cote. 2—Round Prairie. 3—Hutchings. 4—Mud Prairie. 5—Upper Paradise. 6—Last Prairie. 7—Brush Prairie. 8—Burnt Prairie. 9—Upper Holt's. 10—Johnson's (part of Paradise). 11—Six Mile Prairie. 12—Eaton's Prairie. 13—Conant's Prairie. 14—Golum. 15—Four Mile Prairie. 16—Lower Holt's Prairie. 17—Nine Mile. 18—Lower Paradise Prairie.

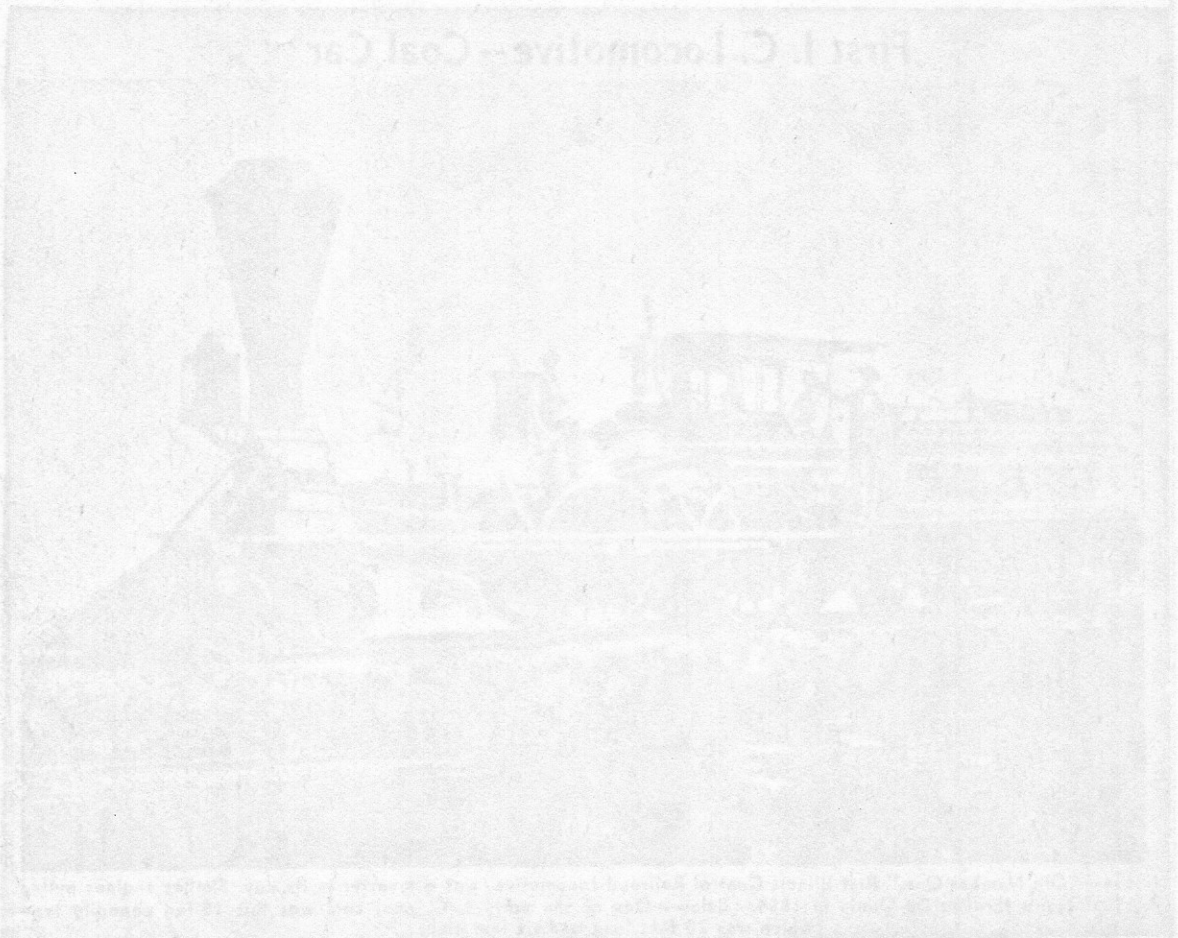


Artist's conception of the first Perry County court house according to specifications for erection of said building as set forth in county records.

First I. C. Locomotive -- Coal Car



Above—"Old Number One," first Illinois Central Railroad locomotive, was a monster in its day. Similar engines pulled the first trains through De Quoin in 1854. Below—One of the early I. C. coal cars was this 15-ton capacity type which was 30 feet long and six feet high.



City's First—and Only—Street Car Line



Mr. and Mrs. Edward Milligan pose on the rear of a horse-drawn street car which once operated on Division street, between Main street and St. John. He was a brother of Rollo Milligan. The street car line began operation about 1888 and was discontinued about 10 years later. It was some time before the rails were removed.

City's First—and Only—Street Car Line



The first trolley line in the city was opened on June 1, 1891, and it was the first of its kind in the West. The line was operated by the City of San Francisco, and it was the first of its kind in the West. The line was operated by the City of San Francisco, and it was the first of its kind in the West.

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21
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34 Total

SUMMARY

This paper covers only a small portion of the historical firsts which have occurred during the one hundred and forty seven years of Perry County's history.

In a short paper such as this many events of importance and interest have to be omitted. I have through careful observation attempted to include in this paper the events which I feel to be of most importance.

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CORRECTION to First known marked grave in Perry County, Illinois.

Old DuQuoin Cemetery Sec 27, T6S, R1W

In Memory Of

EPHRAIM SKINNER

who died

Oct 3 1820

aged 52 yrs.

R. M. Spurgeon
Oct 8, 1975.

CORRECTION to First known marked grave in Perry County, Illinois.

Old Dugan Cemetery Sec 27, T6S, R1W

In Memory Of

EPHRAIM SKINNER

who died

Oct 3 1820

aged 52 yrs.

R. M. Spurgeon
Oct 8, 1975